

THE
Commonweal

An Ecumenical Question

Protestants and Natural Law

by Gregory Baum

Time for a Change?

The President's Electors

by Stephen R. Graubard

A BROADSIDE ATTACK by John Logan

MORE THAN THE GUARDS: A POEM by E. F. Schneider

ALL BLACK AND WHITE by Philip Deasy

SHORT FICTION by Richard Gilman

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ART by Betty Kaufman

Blackfriars

BLACKFRIARS, the monthly review edited by the English Dominicans, was founded in 1920. Father Vincent McNabb, defining its aims in the first number, characteristically remarked that its service of the truth might lead to as short a career as that of the Holy Innocents. In fact BLACKFRIARS is forty years old and through the years it has continued to apply a consistent Christian judgment to those issues in the contemporary world which are too often neglected or evaded.

To meet the needs of its own time must always be the concern of such a review, and BLACKFRIARS, while faithful to its original purpose, is extending its range. Apart from the principal articles in each issue, there will be regular features which will try to give its readers a survey of what is being said in such special fields as education, the social sciences, technology, and ecumenical theology. Month by month there will be an indication of what is appearing in reviews in French, Italian, German and Russian. A series called "Personae" will provide authoritative portraits of men and women who are important for the contemporary life of the Church but who may be little known as yet in this country. In addition, extended book reviews will, as hitherto, provide a regular guide to what is being published.

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THIS WEEK

Week by Week	423
Protestants and Natural Law by Gregory Baum	427
The President's Electors by Stephen R. Graubard	431
Of Note: The American Proposition	433
Dwight Eisenhower, A Good Man by John Cogley	436
The Screen by Philip T. Hartung	437
Books	438
More Than the Guards: A Poem by E. F. Schneider, S.J.	439
Art: Contemporary American by Betty Kaufman	442

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Editor

EDWARD S. SKILLIN

Managing Editor

JAMES O'GARA

Associate Editors

JAMES FINN

RICHARD HORCHLER

Drama Critic: RICHARD HAYES; Movie Critic:
PHILIP T. HARTUNG; Paris: ROBERT BARRAT;
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JOHN BRUBAKER: Advertising Manager

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THE Commonweal

A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts

THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

—week by week—

THE BREAK WITH CUBA

TO AN IMPRESSIVE degree, the last days of the Eisenhower Administration have been committed to facilitating the transfer of power to the incoming Administration of John F. Kennedy. Indeed, the good will and mutual regard shown by the outgoing and incoming Presidents, particularly after such a bruising campaign and election, have been both remarkable and reassuring.

That all this has been true, however, makes the recent decision to break relations with Cuba, taken by Mr. Eisenhower a mere seventeen days before he surrenders his office to Mr. Kennedy, just that much harder to understand. Obviously, President Eisenhower and his aides judged that the arguments in favor of an instant break with Cuba outweighed the arguments against such a step. And certainly once a President is convinced that national affairs demand from him a particular action, taken immediately, he would be derelict in his duty if he failed to take that action. The only trouble with this observation is that the facts of the case seem not to justify the conclusion that the welfare of the Republic required just this action at just this time.

The first reason adduced for cutting off diplomatic relations with the Castro government relates to the question of United States prestige. It was argued that to have accepted the last affront of the Castro government—the abrupt and insulting order to reduce the embassy staff to eleven persons, within forty-eight hours—would have humiliated this country and cost it dearly in its role of leadership. There is a limit, it was said, to the indignity which should be suffered by any self-respecting government, no matter how patient and peaceable.

The next consideration was the practical one of trying to conduct diplomatic business with such an impossibly inadequate staff. Better to drama-

tize this fact by a clean break, this argument ran, than to collaborate in the fiction that anything like normal relations could be maintained between the two countries.

Last, and probably most importantly, it was asserted that the drastic step of severing all relations was required to make clear to Cubans and to all Latin Americans the seriousness with which the United States regarded the problem of Fidelismo, in Cuba and throughout the hemisphere. Only by this extreme and forceful action, it was said, could we make clear to the world, and especially to Latin America, our belief that Castro must be prevented from extending his influence any further.

THESE are at least practical arguments, but the “unofficial” justification for President Eisenhower’s decision, as reflected in numerous approving editorials in the popular press, seems dangerously emotional and self-delusory. This is the view that recognition of a government by the United States is somehow a reward and that breaking relations with a country necessarily works great hardship upon the government which is thus Podsnapped out of existence. Actually, of course, recognition of one government by another is a utilitarian device—or at least it was until it was endowed with moral value by Woodrow Wilson—and it is designed simply to assist in the carrying out of a state’s own national objectives.

At any rate, even the sensible arguments for cutting diplomatic ties with Cuba are easily countered, if not overwhelmed, by a long string of arguments against this step. Regarding the protection of American prestige, for instance, it can immediately be pointed out that a colossus like the United States can hardly be damaged in its national pride by the impertinences of a tiny state like Cuba

—unless it is a colossus with an unsuitably thin skin and a deficient sense of proportion.

Concerning the impracticality of maintaining an embassy without sufficient personnel to carry out its functions, it can be said that half a loaf is surely better than none, and the embassy in Havana, however efficient it may be, exists to assist the United States in the accomplishment of its own objectives, not to honor the government of Cuba. To have no representatives in Havana, to be cut off from information and from access to Cuban officials and non-officials, will certainly not make the achievement of U.S. objectives any easier.

As for the effectiveness of the break in convincing Latin America of U.S. concern over the spread of Castroism in the Caribbean, it can be noted that Latin American commentators believe, and said as much many months ago, that belligerent actions on the part of the U.S. only create sympathy for Castro and strengthen the image of the arrogant Yankee imperialists. It has already been reported that several Latin American states which were on the verge of breaking with Castro have now changed their minds, lest they be branded as U.S. satellites.

Unfortunately, the list of objections to this major foreign policy step is by no means exhausted. There is the fact that breaking with Cuba appears to be exactly what the U.S.S.R. wanted us to do, the fact that the position of the base at Guantanamo has been rendered more difficult, the fact that the Cubans reportedly “weeping on the embassy steps” have now had their last avenue of escape cut off. Most of all, there is the fact that many other responses to the Cuban provocation would have

served the purposes of the U.S. State Department at least as well as the extreme and hardly revocable step which was taken.

The very least one can say, after considering these objections, is that the issue was not so clear and unequivocal as to justify such a sweeping and precipitate move on the eve of the inauguration of a new President. Inevitably, the suggestion has been made that the only explanation of President Eisenhower's act is that he deliberately intended to embarrass the incoming Administration and to commit it to policies of his choosing. This suggestion must be firmly and thoroughly repudiated. It is hard to imagine that any President could be so vindictive and so irresponsible as to use major foreign policy decisions merely as tools for partisan ends. But the fact that such a monstrous suggestion has been made at all indicates how difficult it is for some to comprehend any reasonable basis for this last Eisenhower impulse.

What is done is done, of course, and no doubt the nation will survive. The break with Cuba simply adds new factors—albeit extremely troublesome ones—to a problem for the new President that was already delicate and dangerous. And it makes a final, characteristic gesture for an Administration which has all too often alternated wildly between “too little, too late,” and “too much, too soon.”

MR. NIXON'S DECLARATION

THERE WAS no doubt about the outcome of the voting of the Electoral College; the actors merely had to go through the proper paces. The electors voted, the votes were counted, and Vice President Nixon declared Senator John F. Kennedy the winner. But there was more interest and feeling than one could have anticipated, and this was due solely to the Vice President and his wholly commendable performance at the time. Taking account of the unusual circumstances, Mr. Nixon said, in part:

“This is the first time in one hundred years that a candidate for the Presidency announced the result of an election in which he was defeated and announced the victory of his opponent. I do not think we could have a more striking and eloquent example of the stability of our constitutional system and of the proud tradition of the American people of developing, respecting and honoring institutions of self government.

“In our campaigns, no matter how hard-fought they may be, no matter how close the election may

NEXT WEEK

JOHN P. SISK writes in the Education Issue about conservatism on the campus.

“Most students understand enough about real liberal and radical positions to realize that they demand something like a heroic degree of commitment; and they know that such a commitment, however much it may appeal to their natural idealism, is not for them. In fact, one sometimes gets the impression that the extreme, eccentric or heroic gesture is a luxury they have no time for. They are products of a square if somewhat confused world, and they hope (often with their fingers crossed) to fit squarely and comfortably into place in it when they graduate.”

turn out to be, those who lose accept the verdict, and support those who win. . . ."

These words derive neither from cynicism nor sentimentality, nor will they be deprived of meaning by the cynicism of those who viewed them as a step in pure political expediency, nor by those who think they easily gloss over very real differences. Those words, which are an indication of what Mr. Nixon at his best can be and do, derive from a substantial American political tradition. Mr. Nixon did well to recall it at this time.

PROTEST IN SPAIN

FROM TIME to time reports get out that, for all the official favor it enjoys, the Church in Franco Spain encounters recurring opposition. It is hardly surprising that under a political dictatorship as ironclad as that of Generalissimo Franco's there should be points of dispute. Nor would it be uncircumspect to attempt to dissociate the Church from a regime with not many years to live, especially one that is so widely feared and hated.

The letter of Enrique Cardinal Pla y Deniel, Primate of Spain and head of Spanish Catholic Action, to José Solís Ruiz, chief of the Falange and of the Syndicates of Spain, would appear to imply considerably more than that, however. It was a private letter written by the Cardinal two months ago, news of which reached this country only at the turn of the year. In general it constitutes an express warning that a Church-State struggle is imminent in Spain; in particular it sharply criticizes official policy toward workers and their organization.

Only the other day Franco spoke with pride of the present Spanish syndical system which (forcibly) gathers some eight million employers and workers into a single nationwide organization. In the syndicates' elections, which are held every three years, choice of the numerous local and minor posts is comparatively unhindered. Positions of syndical authority remain under strict government control. The Cardinal-Archbishop of Toledo is now protesting that the workers do not enjoy the "authentic" representation promised under this set-up.

But he is even more exercised about the regime's interference with the Catholic Workers Brotherhoods, an affiliate of Catholic Action which has been seeking, in the face of continual harassment, to build up an élite among the workers in Spain. The Brotherhoods number only six thousand members, but even so have encountered official opposi-

tion in every quarter, particularly when individual members have aspired to positions of influence in the syndicates. (In the course of his letter, by the way, Cardinal Pla y Deniel made mention of invitations to the leaders of the Brotherhoods to visit labor unions in the United States.)

In the past two decades little has developed to lessen the alienation of the workers from the Church in most of the provinces of Spain—an alienation that was accentuated by the cruelties of the Spanish Civil War. Even today in most parts of that hard-pressed country the extremes of wealth and poverty are appalling. There are wide variations from province to province, but lack of church attendance serves as a rough index of the vast disaffection of the Spanish masses from what should be their cherished heritage. In a few dioceses bishops and priests have recently been laboring heroically through social action to turn the tide. The Brotherhoods movement appears to be a more general effort in a similar direction. Its success over such fierce government opposition would therefore serve as a most welcome omen of constructive change.

ECONOMIC PROSPECTS

NEW ADMINISTRATIONS are traditionally strong for calling a spade a spade. Eisenhower economists might be willing to describe present conditions as a "shallow slump," a "mild downturn," a "softness in the economy" or even as a "failure of the economy to react in a positive manner." Mr. Kennedy's economic advisers reject such phrases and say flatly that we are in a recession. Whatever terminology is preferred, it is clear that the economy is not in the best of shape as the new President begins his term of office. And in this situation there is no doubt that Mr. Kennedy will receive a great deal of advice on how to proceed, some solicited and some not.

Included in the solicited-advice category is the work of his new economic task force, headed by Paul A. Samuelson, professor of economics at M.I.T. In its pre-inauguration report to Mr. Kennedy, Professor Samuelson's group said bluntly that the country was in a recession but suggested that there was no need to "push the panic button," urging that no "massive spending programs" or "hastily devised public works schemes" be used at this point. What would help, the economist said, would be a temporary three or four per cent cut in income taxes, to take effect in March or April

unless economic indicators show promise of recovery early in the new year.

The basic idea behind the tax abatement proposal, of course, is to give purchasing power a shot in the arm. A similar if more sweeping proposal was previously made as part of a twenty-point legislative program advanced by the A.F.L.-C.I.O. In a resolution calling on Mr. Kennedy for quick, decisive action, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. executive council cited such discouraging indications as declining production and increasing inventories, especially in automobiles, and said: "These trends indicate the likelihood of a continuing decline of production and employment during the next three to six months or more."

Labor's recommendations on the slump called for income tax forgiveness to a maximum of \$100 yearly, at the discretion of the President and with the approval of Congress, when and if unemployment exceeds seven per cent of the work force. This plan, said A.F.L.-C.I.O. head George Meany, would provide an extra five billion dollars in purchasing power to stimulate the economy. In addition, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. urged passage of five economic measures already on the new Administration's "must" list and called for federal expenditure of three hundred million dollars for public works this year, a sum it said would generate two billion dollars in projects and two hundred and eighty thousand jobs.

Organized labor, it is clear, is pessimistic about economic prospects in 1961, and not without reason. Just before the Presidential election the unemployment rate had mounted to more than six per cent. In December, George Meany said, unemployment climbed past six and one-half per cent, and he thinks the worst is still ahead of us. These are national figures; regional figures illustrate the severity of the problem even more sharply, with unemployment in Pennsylvania, for example, now falling just under ten per cent.

None of this makes for cheerful reading, but there are two facts about the present situation that seem to us encouraging. The first is that in current discussions economic forces are not being treated as irrational and quite unpredictable furies completely outside of human control. The second fact, though tending in the opposite direction, is related to the first: that few people today imagine that these economic forces are so simple that their containment and direction can be easily achieved. Significantly, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. council said: "The proportions of the problem confronting the American economy are quite enormous. It is not likely that a high rate

of economic growth can be achieved in a year that begins with declining economic activities." Mr. Meany expressed the same idea in harsher terms: "Years of stagnation cannot be overcome in a few months." Both statements reflect a healthy awareness of the complexity and gravity of the economic problems we face.

Legislation on behalf of the depressed areas, such as the measure already advanced by Senator Paul Douglas, will have an immediate effect and should get Congressional priority. But the general problem of economic downturn has to be considered in terms of a whole series of major challenges: how to meet the expanding power of the Soviet Union; how to slow or halt the flight of gold; how to make the jump to industrial automation without large-scale technological unemployment; how to meet foreign competition without resort to high tariff walls; how to expand the purchasing power of the bottom twenty-five per cent of the American population; how to help the underdeveloped nations increase their own productive capacities. These are some of the problems confronting the United States as we enter the new year. They are not simple problems, singly or in combination, and they will not be simply solved. But neither are they entirely beyond human capacity, and the recognition of this fact and the willingness of the new Administration to tackle them in earnest are encouraging signs.

RECALLING THE CIVIL WAR

THERE ARE those who look with disfavor upon the observance of the hundredth anniversary of the Civil War, and they have some sound reasons. We are not persuaded, however. The Civil War is still a living part of our national history and we do well to recall it, attempting still to learn from its harsh lessons.

"We humbly repent the bitterness that turned brother against brother," said the Rev. William Robbins at Grant's tomb in New York. And at Lexington, Virginia, after praise for both Grant and Lee, Dr. Francis Gaines recalled that if Lee "had a slogan," it was a simple and eloquent one, "we are all Americans now."

That the Civil War and its aftermath left the nation with problems we have yet to solve is incontrovertible. But it can serve to remind us that some problems, once thought insurmountable, are now part of the past. It is in this spirit that the anniversary observance should take place; in this spirit we can best face the problems that yet remain.

Protestants and Natural Law

What message can the Church offer to modern society apart from the Sermon on the Mount?

by GREGORY BAUM

THE ECUMENICAL community of Protestant Christians is keenly aware of the moral implications of the gospel in regard to human society. They believe the Christian Church has received a message for the world. In our day the Christian Church finds it increasingly difficult to remain silent in the face of moral corruptions, human injustices, and the social and political conflicts. The ecumenical community feels that the Church has discovered, as never before, its God-given responsibility for the world.

But what message can the Church offer to society apart from the Sermon on the Mount? Is there anything the Church can say that is relevant for the millions of men without faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ? This is the question which Protestant Christians are beginning to take very seriously. Is there a common bond between believers and unbelievers, so that the same principles of morality may be applied to human behavior in general? Is there a goodness, a loyalty, an uprightness, a sense of social responsibility to which every man is held, whatever his religion, and which is discoverable by every man, whatever his religion? This question brings up the ancient theme of natural law. According to the age-old tradition of natural law, it is the vocation of man, of every man, to be faithful to what is most profound in him. Morality is not something added to man from without, not obedience to a command which remains extrinsic to him: to be good is rather man's correspondence to what he has been made to be, basically and radically, by God. Man is destined to morality by the very fact that he is man.

While traditional Protestantism and modern positivism have rejected the ancient concept of natural law, for very different reasons, to be sure, there has been in recent years a widespread return to the idea of a natural law, or at least a new sympathy and understanding for it. A crucial experience for human

society, Christian or otherwise, was the Nazi movement with its insane violation of human values. The vast majority of men felt that there are certain fundamental principles of morality which no person has the right to violate, even when the laws of the state condone such action or command it. When the extermination of peoples and races was made the policy of the state and entered into its legislation, most people spontaneously felt that there is an unwritten law beyond the law of the state, against which human legislation cannot oblige. Positive law is not the ultimate criterion of justice. There is a law behind the law. This conviction of a law natural to man was, in fact, the position assumed by many of the judges at the Nuremberg trials.

The conviction that there is a law written in the human heart, discoverable by our conscience, is supported by the tradition of the American people, whatever jurists may think about it. The average American, the average Protestant American even, is convinced of abiding moral standards applicable to all peoples, the defense of which is especially the task of the Christian Church.

IN OUR DAY, particularly after the shattering experience of the Nazis, many Protestant theologians and writers show a renewed interest in the ancient notion of natural law. That this is found in many quarters of American Protestantism is not surprising. But even on the continent of Europe, many Lutheran thinkers are returning to the concept of natural law. Re-reading the Scriptures, they find sufficient warrant for such a doctrine in God's revelation.

A return to the natural law, however, is by no means characteristic of all Protestant schools. There is still much opposition to it, even in circles greatly concerned with the social message of the Church. This opposition is based on a variety of arguments. Some writers, going back to Luther's and Calvin's pessimis-

Father Gregory Baum, O.S.A., is a member of the faculty of St. Basil's Seminary, Toronto, and the author of *That They May Be One*.

tic view on human nature, believe that what is most profound in man as we find him on this earth, is sin and corruption, and hence that it is impossible to base any kind of morality on man's fidelity to his basic inclination. The measure of what is good comes wholly and entirely from without, from the Word of God in the Scriptures. The great Karl Barth belongs to this group of writers, unless indeed his Christology is leading him to a new understanding of human nature. The venerable secretary of the World Council of Churches, Visser 't Hooft, also belongs to this group. He proposes that we must study the Bible, its teaching on society and economic relations, to discover the God-given principles and moral standards destined to heal the social problems of our day.

But, we may ask, even assuming that a social ethics could be derived from Holy Scripture, would it be meaningful to the millions for whom the Bible is not the Word of God? These writers seem to hope that it will. Does this not mean then, we may ask, that there is something in non-believers which is in harmony with God's law? This, at any rate, is the Catholic conviction: the moral norms God has revealed in His gospel, while a shock and a scandal to human selfishness, do correspond to the inclination which God has imprinted on the human heart at creation.

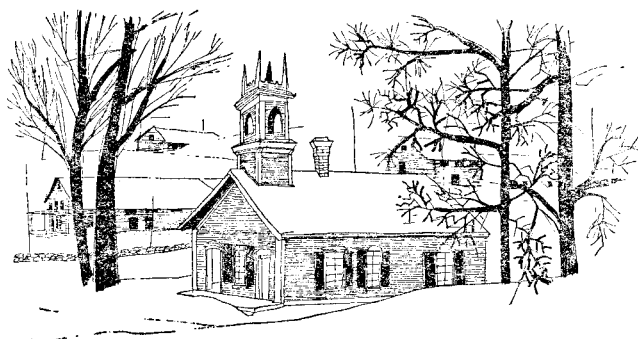
A more common objection to the notion of natural law is taken from the conviction that man's moral behavior cannot be determined by fixed norms. We cannot see through "human nature," analyze it as we do a geometrical figure, and then draw all kinds of conclusions from it as to its proper behavior. Man cannot master himself intellectually. Man remains a riddle to himself. *Quaestio mihi factus sum*, writes St. Augustine. "There is something belonging to man," the great doctor concludes, "that the spirit of man which is within does not know. But Thou, O Lord, knowest all of him, for Thou hast made him." To know what man really is we must turn to God. For many Protestant writers man has not a nature that can be brought into a metaphysical formula. Man escapes any conceptualization of his essence: he is always free to raise himself above any given pattern. Some writers go so far, influenced here by the heady wine of existentialism, as to claim that this freedom in faith is what is proper to man, this freedom distinguishing him from the rest of the universe, which is nature. The mystery of man is that he is never wholly nature. Reinhold Niebuhr, the most influential American writer opposing the concept of natural law, follows this kind of thinking.

The Discussion on natural law, then, is very lively in Christian literature of our time. There is an interesting formulation of the controversy going on within the Protestant ecumenical community between those who uphold, in one form or another, the ancient idea of natural law and those who do not believe that the

divine imperative is expressed in the structure of God's universe and of the human heart. At the Oxford Conference (1937) of the Life-and-Work movement a distinction was introduced which has occupied the ecumenical discussion ever since, the distinction between an "ethic of ends" and an "ethic of inspiration."

The upholders of an ethic of ends look upon the universe as an ordered whole, in which man and human society have their particular functions and proper operations discoverable by a rational examination of their natures. This conception presupposes a meaningful universe with a hierarchy of values: the right behavior of each part of the universe can be read from the end and purpose for which it is destined in the harmony of the whole. The upholders of an ethic of inspiration, on the other hand, are convinced that the moral attitude of the Christian cannot be defined in terms of fixed laws; it is rather a living response to a living person. Man is not destined to unfathom the universe and himself, and to conform himself to the structure of their finiteness. He is to seek fellowship with God, the Father of Jesus Christ, Who is sovereignly free, unlimited by His creation and its structures, and to learn every day anew that to be good means to do the will of God. This will must be sought in a personal decision at every moment.

THIS DISTINCTION has been taken very seriously by the ecumenical community. In the documents of the World Council of Churches dealing with social matters, the demands for a just social order, which are without a doubt implied in the Gospel, are usually formulated in such a way that even the upholders of an ethic of inspiration can accept them. Here is an example. The social order which corresponds to God's ideal for humanity is called "the responsible society" and defined as a society which allows a man and his family to determine the pattern of their lives in a responsible way, that is, living up to the demands of their right conscience. When the documents of the World Council of Churches, however, come to a more detailed determination of what such a responsible society implies in terms of political and economic relations, they are unable to avoid, it seems to me, the terminology of what they call an ethic of ends.



In spite of what is said, there seems to be the underlying conviction in the World Council of Churches that such principles as the value of the individual, the social nature of man, or the unity of the human family correspond to the deepest aspirations of the human personality: in other words, that there is something like a natural law of human nature. We suspect therefore that the distinction between an ethic of ends and an ethic of inspiration is not a good one. It is interesting to note that Pope Pius XII in his Christmas message of 1946 laying down the principles for a just social order, very much in the tradition of an ethic of ends, sums up these requirements as "social forms which permit and ensure men full personal responsibility in things temporal and things eternal," slipping into a terminology of what has been called an ethic of inspiration.

The distinction between an ethic of ends and an ethic of inspiration, though interesting, is not a good one. It does not permit the Catholic to state his view on morality and the ethical engagement of man. Sometimes, it is true, the Catholic position is presented as if it were an ethic of ends. Sometimes, when defending and explaining our natural law tradition we give too nationalistic an account of the matter. We pretend that we can see through human nature, that we can conceptualize it adequately, and derive from it detailed laws concerning human behavior. We create the impression, occasionally, that the natural law is a set of laws, a little codex hidden in the heart, giving us the solution of the moral problems of man and society. Conceiving the natural law as laws, we have the obvious difficulty of explaining why there are different moral standards in various societies, and why philosophical systems have arrived at laws, supposedly all derived from natural law, which in fact are at variance with one another.

The ethic of ends which we occasionally construct does give the impression that morality is obedience to impersonal laws, to rules which the human mind discovers. More than that, we easily create the impression in many of our defenses of natural law that there is an order of righteous living independent of Jesus Christ, that there exists a natural morality according to a natural law unrelated to the redemption of mankind in the Son of God. What Christ brings us, we sometimes suggest, are the gifts of faith, hope, and charity, i.e., the supernatural life; while there is a life of natural goodness accessible to all men. This, at least, is how we are understood by many Protestant writers. Reinhold Niebuhr especially delights in depicting our teaching in this way. He does so in most, if not in all, of his books. When he calls this conception thomistic, let us hope that he does so to indicate that he learned these things, not from Thomas himself, but from certain writers who called themselves thomists.

TO CLARIFY the Catholic position on natural law as I understand it, I wish to make two remarks: the first on the non-conceptual character of this natural law and the second on the relation of this law to the redemptive order in Jesus Christ.

The natural law is not a set of laws in the human heart. The natural law is an unwritten law; it is not conceptualized. According to the metaphysical intuition of a St. Thomas, in harmony with a long line of men of wisdom, the very being of man implies his moral vocation. Man is engaged in moral striving, not on account of laws distinct from him, but by his very nature. Morality is man's fidelity to what God made him to be. It may be difficult to define what man is; it may be difficult to hit upon an exhaustive enumeration of man's essential characteristics. Concretely human nature may be defined as that which the Son of God took upon Himself when He became this man Jesus—from which follows that human nature is eminently compatible with holiness.

But whether we can come to a definition of man or not, is irrelevant from our point of view here. For the knowledge of what the natural law in man's heart implies is not rationally derived from a definition of human nature; it is not extracted from premises by means of a syllogism; it is not the conclusion of an argument. We discover what the natural law demands of us in the various situations of life, not by rational knowledge, but by knowledge *per inclinationem*. This "kind of knowledge is not clear knowledge through concepts and conceptual judgments; it is obscure, unsystematic, vital knowledge by connaturality or congeniality, in which the intellect in order to bear judgment consults and listens to the inner melody that the vibrating strings of abiding tendencies make present in the subject." (Maritain).

At this point nothing is said in what kind of salvific situation man must find himself in order to listen to, and understand, this inner melody. Our point here is that the moral imperative implied in human existence is not expressed in a conceptual and detailed knowledge of laws and principles. This latter kind of knowledge is, of course, of greatest importance for society, but it has grown and developed rather slowly in human history. As man became more aware of the implications of his actions, as he moved into various social and economic environments, as he received and assimilated the new light of the gospel, he discovered and formulated the moral principles expressed by the inclination of his nature. In this slow process mistakes were made. Our knowledge of what the natural law implies is still imperfect today. It may well be true that, as Reinhold Niebuhr insists in his writings, there is no formulation of the natural law that has altogether escaped an ideological taint, no formulation, we would add by way of restriction, except those contained in

divine revelation. But such a taint of self-interest, or class-interest, is no argument whatever against the natural law which is deeper than any formulation that can be made of it. It is the profound inclination of what God created us to be.

Whenever the philosopher derives specific precepts from the natural law or proves that certain maxims are implied in the law of nature, this is what Maritain calls "after-knowledge." It is a reflection on, and an attempt to penetrate, that which we know by the aspiration of our being. We are often too ready, it seems to me, to claim that certain laws and principles are actually contained in the natural law, when they are actually only remotely connected with it. Because of the difficulty of discovering the profound inclination of our heart, obscured as it is by our congenital selfishness, God has revealed in Holy Scripture, and proclaims through the teaching of the Church, the basic moral principles which are in harmony with our profound inclinations.

THE SECOND remark I wish to make is that man's fidelity to what is deepest in him does not imply the proud assertion that man is in a position to know and master himself, nor that man's recognition of God as the author of the universe is a man-made approach to God based on intellectual power. The sphere of the natural law is related to God's merciful dealing in Jesus Christ.

The New Testament acknowledges a natural law accessible to Jews and pagans alike. While the emphasis is usually on the darkness in which pagans, due to their inherited selfishness, find themselves, there are other passages acknowledging that pagans may have a sound judgment on what is right and wrong (1 Peter 2:12, 3:16) and that pagan magistrates serve God by protecting justice in society (Romans 13:1-6). Paul asserts in the famous passages of Romans (1:19-21 and 2:14-15) that God reveals Himself through the works of His creation and that He makes moral demands on men through the law sunk into their conscience. We may limit the positive force of these statements by saying that all Paul wants to show is that pagans are sinners and in need of redemption, but we would go beyond the meaning of the passages if we said that God's revelation in nature was only unto condemnation.

However much we restrict the scope of Paul's statements, there remains at least the assertion that God reveals Himself clearly enough in creation to make the denial of Him a sin or the consequence of sin, and that some pagans at least, by the fidelity to the law of their hearts, have achieved greater submission to the will of God than the Jews in possession of the Mosaic Law. Some Protestant writers, who for dogmatic reasons reject the notion of natural law, accuse Paul of having introduced stoic elements into the Christian

faith. This may well be the case as far as terminology is concerned. The meaning however is different. Paul makes it clear that in what may appear like the human discovery of the meaning and coherence of the universe, it is God Who manifests Himself. Even here, it is God Who takes the initiative.

How is this divine initiative related to the order in Jesus Christ? We read in the Old Testament that man and the universe is in a covenant relationship to God preparing the ultimate fulfillment in Christ, and this independently of the special covenant God made with Israel. Through his servant Noe, God established a covenant with the earth and all living things on it (Genesis 9:8-17). God promised to preserve the regularity of the seasons, to bestow fruitfulness, to protect life. Thus, meditating on the underlying harmony of the sin-torn universe and the plan of the Creator, we are not presumptuously approaching God through our own finiteness, but we are obedient in discovering the signs established by God for the purpose of revealing himself.

As Saint Paul says in the Acts, "God did not leave himself without testimony [in pagan nations], bestowing blessings, giving rain from heaven and fruitful season, filling [their] hearts with gladness" (14:16). God desires to speak to humanity through the laws of the universe and the inclination of the human heart. This is the meaning of the universal covenant of Noe, preparing the consummation of all things in Christ. Whatever may be the divine assistance necessary for man to listen and understand the divine voice speaking to him through creation and conscience, we know that now, after Christ's universal redemption, this divine assistance is not lacking, that it is present in abundance in all of humanity preparing and initiating its renewal in the Lord.

These two remarks, on the non-conceptual character of the natural law and its relation to God's initiative, indicate, at least in outline, that the natural law which the Catholic Church defends in her teaching, is not simply based on an ethic of ends as opposed to an ethic of inspiration. The natural law is not a set of rules derived rationally from a penetration of the universe. The natural law, or the profound inclination of our humanity, is the imprint of God's creation in our heart as well as the sign through which he reveals to us His holy will. By obeying this law man does not submit to some impersonal necessity, nor to a rational structure of the universe; but he obeys his Maker who thus reveals Himself to him. This is true even of non-believers. For while our nature is radically wounded by inherited selfishness, God's covenant with Noe makes our nature and the universe again a sign of the invisible and a witness to God's eternal will. Metaphysics is possible because God has desired to make the cosmos a manifestation of the transcendental.

*Has the time come
to change our present system?*

The President's Electors

by STEPHEN R. GRAUBARD

THE INAUGURATION of a new President is an appropriate moment to reflect on the Constitution which he is pledged to uphold. By the Twentieth Amendment, passed in 1953, which moved the inauguration date forward from March 4 to January 20, some six weeks of lame-duck government were effectively cut away. Franklin Roosevelt, in 1937, was the first President to begin a new term of office in January. No one today would seriously question the wisdom of that reform; some, however, would suggest that the hazards of the missile age indicate the need for further reforms.

To those given to such fears, the 1960 election sounded a clear warning—the Electoral College system was outmoded and required a drastic overhauling. What would the national plight have been, these Cassandra demand to know, had a few thousand additional votes in Illinois, Texas and New Jersey gone into the Republican column, giving Richard Nixon an Electoral College majority without a popular majority? The answer, quite obviously, is that Richard Nixon would today be President.

The mere suggestion of that possibility causes the inquirer to shudder; it is as if the enemy—an alien authoritarian dictum—is suddenly discerned. Other, even more horrendous possibilities loom up for the individual prepared to imagine things not as they are, but as they might have been, had Providence not intervened to save us. Had Illinois gone Republican, and had there been a number of defections among the Southern electors pledged to Kennedy, the election might have been thrown into the House of Representatives, with the outcome uncertain till the first days of January. Had the defections been numerous enough, and had the electors chosen to vote for Nixon, then an even more terrible result would have followed—Nixon would have been elected, popular vote or no. To all of this only one retort is possible: “these things were indeed conceivable; they did not happen.”

In the middle of the twentieth century, when the problems that beset the nation are difficult and grave, it is curious that we should feel compelled to deal with

matters which are not urgent and which might best be left alone. The reform of the Electoral College is not a matter of any great consequence, and discretion and common sense recommend that we spend our time and energy on more critical concerns.

A FEW FACTS need to be recalled. First, and most importantly, at no time in the twentieth century has the Electoral College system operated to snatch the victory from the more popular candidate. Woodrow Wilson in 1912 and again in 1916, Harry Truman in 1948, and John Kennedy, two months ago, failed to gain a majority of all votes cast (because of minority or third party ballots), but each secured more votes than his principal opponent. Had Charles Evans Hughes received some few thousand additional votes in California in 1916, he would have won the election, though his popular vote in the country was some 600,000 less than Wilson's. Hughes would have won as Harrison did in 1888 when Cleveland lost in the Electoral College despite his popular victory. It is a fact of some significance that the Cleveland-Harrison situation has not repeated itself since 1888. In the last eighteen elections, the Electoral College system, as invented in the eighteenth century and revised by Constitutional amendment in the first years of the nineteenth century, has worked to make the most popular candidate President of the United States.

One would think that such a record would not produce criticism, but would be thought quite adequate. Such, in fact, has not been the case. The closeness of the 1960 election has only revived interest in a whole set of proposals calculated to change the Electoral College system. We have heard a good deal in recent weeks of the Lodge-Gossett Amendment, which would apportion the electoral votes in each state to accord with the ratio of the popular vote. This proposal would fundamentally alter the present system which gives all the electoral votes in each state to the popular victor, however small his margin. We have heard also, although less persistently, of the Mundt recommendations of 1956, which would introduce a complex district representation in the Electoral College. The most popular remedy, however, has been one which would

Mr. Graubard, who has previously contributed, is a member of the department of history at Harvard.

abolish the Electoral College altogether. Prominent among the sponsors of this solution has been Senator Mansfield.

Before the drums for reform beat too loudly, and before too many Democrats decide that the anachronistic Electoral College ought to go, they would do well to reflect on the unintended consequences of other recent Constitutional changes. In this connection, they might recall the ardor which Republicans felt that no President should ever again hold office for more than two elected terms. The Republican Party, continuing to fight Franklin Roosevelt even after his death, pressed forward with its Twenty-second Amendment, which was incorporated into the Constitution in 1951. There is some irony in the fact that the first casualty of this change should have been a Republican, none other than Dwight Eisenhower. It is possible to argue, of course, that Eisenhower would never have consented to run in 1960 even if an Amendment had not taken the decision out of his hands. For those who appreciate the pleasures of Gettysburg but who understand that Washington is not without its charms, such an argument will seem a little hollow. A generation acquainted with Churchill, Adenauer and de Gaulle may be judged leniently if it is not persuaded that a diet of sport and leisure is what every active seventy-year-old man craves.

Senator Mansfield is mistaken in pressing for the abolition of the Electoral College; he has not reflected sufficiently on the likely political consequences of that change. Also, he has ignored the historic fact that in twentieth-century America the chances of the popularly elected candidate losing in the Electoral College are exceedingly small. Most often, the popular and the electoral vote must coincide, the electoral simply exaggerating the extent of the popular victory. Only if, as in 1888, the Electoral College victory went to the less popular candidate would the issue become a real one again. Were such a situation to happen more than once, it is certain that the Electoral College would be reformed (probably, abolished). Such a persistent denial of the majority in the present-day would be deemed an intolerable infringement on democracy. Since, however, this has not happened, one must ask why reformers are so disposed to change an arrangement that works and that may in fact have various beneficial influences on our political activity.

WHAT DOES the Electoral College do to profit us? First, it protects the states and compels politicians to give some thought to their individual existences, their leaders, and their problems. If a candidate needed to concern himself only with winning a popular majority, and if this could be achieved through any combination of votes, without reference to their location, there would be little incentive for candidates

to think in terms of states. Increasingly, in such a situation, the Presidential nominee would become the captive of the national public-opinion poll, taking his lead from its supposedly scientific findings. If he could fashion a majority by appealing to racial and religious minorities, courting labor and ignoring farmers, he would do so. There would no longer be a question of balancing the rural vote against the city vote, seeking to propitiate both, but only a concern to win in the country as a whole. If a Democratic Party candidate imagined that he could obtain more votes than his Republican rival by amassing huge majorities in New York City, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, ignoring the other parts of both states, he would plan his campaign accordingly. His concern would no longer be with winning states—New York and Pennsylvania—but only with securing an absolutely greater number of votes than his opponent.

In such an election, even the largest states would count for less than they do under the present system. As for the smaller states, they would be virtually ignored. Nevada and Vermont presently enjoy six electoral votes in the Electoral College, a number somewhat higher than one per cent of the total; in population terms, they count for considerably less. In the absence of an Electoral College, nominees would estimate such communities only at their population value.

In the United States Senate, as in the Electoral College, states enjoy a real existence. If their power is destroyed or diminished in these places, then another defense falls before the phenomenon of "bigness" which threatens our federal system today. The states will be able to perform responsible functions in the future only if they enjoy repute, which means that being courted and considered, they exist just as surely as pressure groups, whether of Negroes, "senior citizens," or workers. The abolition of the Electoral College would be a blow to the individual identity of states, and, in time, to the moderation which makes any candidate realize that New York State is a collectivity of workers and farmers, city dwellers and town people, Negroes and Jews, and many who fall into none of these categories. It is important that candidates are led to think in terms of states, and that they avoid the more grandiose images invented by advertisers and public opinion polls. A national election ought to be something other than a circus dressed up and parading as a referendum.

If I have neglected to consider alternative schemes for reform, it is because few of them can be taken seriously. Why should the large states consent to lose a part of their influence by agreeing to an Amendment like that proposed by Lodge? The New York voter understands that his ballot counts towards a forty-five electoral vote prize. Why should he consent to change the system so that it will count for only half that number, or some other percentage of it? In large states,

which shift from Party to Party, the political battle would be considerably less engrossing if the electoral vote simply reflected a percentage of the popular vote. As for the Mundt recommendations, they smack too much of an effort to impose a check on the popular vote; such a scheme will be forgotten a decade hence, if it is not already safely interred today.

Only the Mansfield position represents a substantial threat to the prevailing system. With its obvious appeal to democratic preference, it appears as a safety measure, preventing recalcitrant or willing electors from thwarting the popular mandate. Since the Electoral College has not done this since 1888, it is reasonable to ask why the danger should be deemed so acute. Obviously, under the prevailing system, there

is always a chance of the 1888 experience being repeated, but this might be less hazardous than the alternative which is now offered for our consideration.

Until the existing forms show themselves incompatible with popular democracy, which they have not done for three-quarters of a century, they ought not to be lightly abandoned. They protect more than their archaic structure suggests, not the least important thing being a respect for that fragile but complex entity which calls itself a state, and which reminds us of our past. When we have so many real problems to face, it is wrong that we concern ourselves with non-problems. Lord Salisbury, Britain's Conservative Prime Minister, showed understanding when he said: "When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change."

OF NOTE: "THE CATHOLIC HOUR"

The American Proposition

EDITORS' NOTE: On the last four Sundays of January "The Catholic Hour" has been presenting a series of television programs of particular interest to readers of The Commonweal. Presented on N.B.C.-T.V. and produced in cooperation with the National Council of Catholic Men under the supervision of Richard Walsh, the series is entitled "Catholic Reflections on America." With Philip Scharper of Sheed & Ward as moderator, the programs include discussion of such subjects as religious pluralism in America, the role of the layman, national purpose, and the ecumenical movement. Featured on the first two programs, on January 8th and 15th, is Father John Courtney Murray, S.J. Participating in the last two programs, January 22 and 29, are Monsignor Francis J. Lally, editor of the Boston Pilot, William Clancy, editor of Worldview, and James O'Gara, managing editor of The Commonweal. Substantial excerpts from Father Murray's first program follow:

MR. SCHARPER: Father Murray, you are the author of a recent book, *We Hold These Truths, Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition*. . . . Who, precisely, are the "we"?

Father Murray: I think I would say in the first instance that the term "we" has rather a broad and sweeping historical meaning. "We hold these truths"—the first "we" there is we the peoples of the West. In the West a very distinctive type of civilization has been wrought out, not elsewhere found, even though elements of it might elsewhere be found, and the Ameri-

can people, who are the second meaning of "we" in the title, have this larger inheritance. We indeed did give to an older tradition a very distinctive stamp. We made it—we put it in an American form, suited to the conditions of our own particular national life.

Mr. Scharper: But at this precise time in history, the beginning of 1961, "we" hold these truths? When you look at America you find an astonishing variety of philosophies, of religious positions. We usually break down our composition into Protestant, Jew, Catholic—agnostics, secularists, and so forth. And yet "we" hold these truths?

Father Murray: That's of course part, an essential part, of the whole problem that confronts us in America, that confronts all the world but we face it in our own particular and distinctive way. We are religiously divided. "We" are not one religious community at all. And our divisions as between religions are very real, very deep, and the convictions proper to each of these religious communities of America that you have enumerated are dear to them. Consequently you have, as an essential aspect of our common problem, how to preserve the integrity of the individual conscience and its conviction, and at the same time not completely disrupt the whole political community by allowing divisions in religion to thrust themselves into the common life. It's extremely difficult and it's a problem that is never finally solved, I presume. It is one that calls for continual solution, progressive solution, as different aspects of it come to the fore, in history.

Mr. Scharper: Of the two possible extreme solutions,

you would obviously reject the one of submerging our religious differences by pretending, for example, that they didn't exist—as though while we are Protestant, Catholic, Jew, secularist and so forth, this is not terribly important.

Father Murray: Here you really have to arrange your proper loyalties, and anyone who really believes in God must set God and the truth of God above all other considerations. His basic, his highest loyalty always is to his conscience and to the community within which his conscience is formed. And hence there can be no thought of blurring religious differences, or somehow submerging them in some undifferentiated mass opinion where the result would be that it didn't really matter. It matters terribly. It must matter to any man who has a set of religious convictions, that he be protected in the holding of them and in the exercise of the duties that they impose upon him.

Mr. Scharper: So that quite apart from the differences that mark us . . . there is an immense deposit you would hold in the political and social order of truths which we the American people hold?

Father Murray: Well, I think that's the basic distinction that has to be made between the truths of the theological and religious order (and on this plane we are radically divided) and the political community which, if it is to be a political community at all, must somehow be one. It must have some principle of cohesion. This is the second aspect of what is commonly called the problem of religious pluralism. How do you protect the pluralism of the religious plane at the same time that you maintain an adequate unity, at any rate, on the plane of political life? And vice versa, how do you prevent the unity on the political life from thrusting itself into the religious sphere and blurring, or tending to blur religious differences?

Mr. Scharper: Father Murray, with regard to this unity on the level of political life, what would be, on the political level, the unity of truth, the common agreement in *We Hold These Truths*? What are the truths?

Father Murray: This of course is the first question. I think to answer it you have to recall that political life is a life of action. Society and the state ought to be conceived in terms of action, basically. Now all action must have a purpose of some sort, and hence the basic truths to which I make reference here are not simply mine. I took the book title, after all, from the Declaration of Independence—"we hold these truths to be self evident." The basic truths here are the truths that govern the political purposes as such. And I don't suppose you could find a better, or more classic statement of them than that afforded by the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States where it said, "We the people"—beginning with our "we"—"in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure

the domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. . . ." In this classic statement you have the essential structure of political ends, the ends that are proper to a civilized society. These are not just words. . . . For instance, the basic political end would, of course, be justice. This is the primary purpose of government and of law, and it is the purpose too of the citizenry, in cooperation with the agencies of government, to insure justice, to insure that what is owed to men be rendered to them.

Now of course the first thing that is owed to a civilized people is freedom. This goes back as far as John of Salisbury. "It is the first duty of the king to fight for justice," he said, "and for the freedom of the people." And the fight for freedom is, really, an aspect of the striving for justice. Then, if justice is rendered to the citizenry and by the citizenry to the government in terms of fulfillment of political duties (and if the people are free), then you have an achievement to some relative extent of what is the highest political end, namely peace, which is what we mean by "the domestic tranquility."

Mr. Scharper: Your citing the Preamble of the Constitution brings up what seems a significant point. . . . Here we had a body of men, brought together at a critical moment in their history and the world's history, and yet in a comparatively brief time they managed to come to some kind of very operative agreement. Is there a lesson for us, would you feel, in the intellectual background of these men?

Father Murray: I think there is. This is one of the great phenomena in history, that that group of men, at the end of the 18th century, when it came time to devise a constitutional law for this still not so widely scattered people but still a people that had then the germs of greatness in it—that almost without thinking, they sat down and wrote out this set of political purposes. So familiar were they with the Western political tradition to which I referred a moment ago, that these things came to their minds instantly. They hardly had to think, and they put them down, and put them down in order.

It was the force of a great tradition that launched our republic, and I suppose one of the problems . . . is how does this tradition fare today. . . . Back there you did have this extraordinary agreement on basic truths . . . certainly one great truth that lies behind this statement of political purpose—the truth to which we customarily refer by saying in Lincoln's words "that this is a nation under God"—that political life has a premise beyond itself, a premise that is theological, the existence of God, and then joined with that there is the other truth about man, the essential truth about man, namely that man is a sacredness. . . .

Mr. Scharper: Father Murray, you have stated—explicitly once or twice and it seems to me to serve as more or less the intellectual background for almost everything that you have said—the idea that there is in America, which has a Western heritage, a tradition of reason which is, or should be brought to bear on these problems and situations in the political and civic order. But I think the question always comes back when one speaks of the tradition of reason, to the question—whose reason? Is it a sort of self-appointed intellectual elite, or is it to be the reason, so to speak, of the majority? When we speak of the rule of reason in law—whose reason?

Father Murray: Ah yes, yes, that's the difficult question. I think all that one can say is that what we aspire to is the rule of right reason. And then of course the question always returns—well, yes, but whose reason is right? And this raises another and larger question, namely, whether or not there be such a thing as the tradition of reason. To speak of right reason implies that reason has some sort of historical dimension, that things have been thought about in the past, that answers have been cast up for basic fundamental human problems, and that these answers are right—right in terms of truth—they've been tested also by experience. There is therefore a continually growing body of reason, which I call "right". And this comes along to us as a tradition—never finally finished indeed, always to be refined, always to be added to, as human experience, social experience especially, and political experience develops. . . .

And then, the next point that comes up is—well, where would I find this tradition of reason? . . . Well, I suppose you could go into the Bodleian Library or the British Museum or the Congressional Library or any good university library, and there on the shelves, you could find it. This would be a lengthy task and not, obviously, one that anybody at all could fulfill. I think there is a simpler solution to the question, where is this tradition of reason? The proper depository of the tradition of reason at any given moment is, and can only be, what I shall call the public mind. This is where one ought to be able to find it, if it really is a vital living tradition, that is setting a hand of guidance upon the national life, and being effective in the solution of problems that the national life encounters.

So you'd find it in the public mind. Well, you can't, obviously, go and explore the public mind as such. Therefore you have to look into the public argument. In this country there is forever an argument going on, a public argument, about a variety of things. It goes on in several levels. It goes on with regard to what we call affairs of state, that is to say, the right and proper, just and prudent policies to be followed by government both in the field of domestic policy and foreign affairs. Then you have another more broad area of public argument,

I'll call it the area of public affairs. And of course there the biggest public affair always is education, and we set great store on this.

Mr. Scharper: . . . I wonder . . . how the tradition is faring today? Is the argument on the intellectual level and in the popular mind going well or badly?

Father Murray: Well, first of all, I think that when I spoke of the public mind, I perhaps should have distinguished two major levels of the public mind. The one I'll call the level of popular wisdom. That is a very difficult thing to define indeed but I think it's an intelligible concept almost by itself. Curiously, we appeal in this country frequently (and this is good American doctrine—going back to James Madison, who himself goes back to a good medieval principle) to the idea—"the people shall judge." We presume that there is a sense of justice and a desire for freedom as well as for peace, inherent in the people at large, and that out of this sense of justice, thus participated in commonly by the people, there come basic judgments upon the conduct of public affairs, upon the style of government, upon the particular objectives that government chooses to pursue or not to pursue. This is a wisdom. . . . It has to do frequently with very simple principles of right and wrong. Sometimes it gets down pretty much to the level of the western story—you know, the hero says, "Right is right and wrong is wrong, and there's no doubt."

Mr. Scharper: "Don't ask me to tell you why but I know—"

Father Murray: That's precisely the point. He doesn't quite know. Hence the public mind must have another dimension, another level—the level, namely, of those, who are able, philosophically, to articulate this wisdom, to put it down in propositions, to argue for it, to meet objections against it, to make a body out of the whole thing. And this I presume is, or should be, the proper task of the University.

Mr. Scharper: So that when you speak of the tradition of reason, and the place where we find it, we find it on two levels, each one of which, far from excluding the other, actually presupposes and needs—

Father Murray:—they are intimately allied.

Mr. Scharper: So it is not a question of a fascist intellectual elite, so to speak, nor a question of majority or indeed mob rule.

Father Murray: I would hold very strongly myself for the principle of aristocracy in a good American sense, a good Thomas Jefferson sense, in a sense older than Thomas Jefferson—that is to say the leadership of what Washington called the wise and honest man—a man who is both wise and honest, who knows, and who also has virtue which makes him want to have his wisdom operative for the good of the community. In this sense I would accept, maybe not the word elite, but certainly the principle of intellectual and spiritual leadership.

DWIGHT EISENHOWER, A GOOD MAN

THERE WAS a story making the rounds during the holidays about a Japanese toy called the Eisenhower doll. The Eisenhower doll is a wind-up toy. You wind it and wind it and wind it and it doesn't do a blessed thing.

There you have one view of the outgoing President's Administration, a harsh one. It is not mine. I do not think General Eisenhower will be counted among our great Presidents, though few have been so consistently popular; but neither do I believe that he will be counted a failure, and it may be that the very complacency lampooned in the toy joke—if complacency be the word for it—was just what the nation needed during these past eight years.

Certainly the President was not without faults, and his history in the White House is an ironic comment on those who originally argued it was dangerous to elect a military man because they tend to be overly decisive. Those who pointed out that Eisenhower acted as if the American presidency were an honorific position, like the British monarchy, were corroborated again and again; he did reign more than he ruled. But, in his favor, we all have to admit, don't we, that the nation is much more united than it was when he took over in 1953? And that is no mean accomplishment.

Mr. Kennedy was unquestionably right when he insisted that America could not afford to stand still any longer. But perhaps we needed the Eisenhower respite more than we have been willing to acknowledge. Perhaps in 1952 we needed, above all, to take stock of ourselves, to rally around a popular conservative figure, and dampen some of the political passion that flared throughout the long Roosevelt and Truman years and promised to rage throughout a Stevenson term of office. In any case, that is what happened. The Eisenhower years were a time for the middle of the road, for binding old political wounds and restoring a shattered unity of purpose.

The problem of course is that one can not stand forever in the middle of the road; sooner or later one has to move to one side or the other to catch up with the traffic. That time has come for us, and that is why it would be extremely dangerous for a new Eisenhower to succeed the old one. Here, in the recent campaign Senator Kennedy had a distinct advantage. He could call for a great push forward, while Nixon, stuck with the Eisenhower record, could not admit that Kennedy was right and that middle-of-the-roadism was no longer possible.

In 1952, during the first Eisenhower-Stevenson campaign, Walter Lippmann, who enthusiastically supported Kennedy eight years later, held that it was im-

portant that the Republicans be restored to power. Twenty years of frustration for a political party was too much. Had that twenty been extended to twenty-eight and Stevenson rather than Eisenhower were leaving the White House this month, what would the mood of the country be? I think we well might have more social progress to look back on than the Eisenhower Administration can point to, but there would be such bitterness, such rancor, dissension and divisiveness that our basic unity would be in danger.

It is hard to imagine any other public figure in either party playing the role Eisenhower performed during the past eight years. The simple reason is that he is a unique personality who exquisitely projects qualities the nation values highly. If these qualities added up to greatness it was because there were so many of them in such stable harmony. To be sure, from time to time we all missed some over-riding thrust of boldness, political leadership, or flash of imagination, and there were times when these qualities were sorely needed. But in their place Eisenhower provided the unified appeal of the Good Man, fair, judicious, honest, tolerant, reasonable, cautious, loyal, and reverent.

Indeed, Eisenhower, better than anyone else who comes to mind, fits his own oft-repeated model of the ideal American. Above all, he has been the Good Citizen writ large. Richard Nixon spoke effectively about the General's restoring "dignity" to the White House in his campaign efforts. That "dignity"—which was something different from Franklin D. Roosevelt's political genius or Harry S. Truman's impassioned partisanship—may have been what we needed more than anything else after the push of the Democratic Administrations. If it is true that a kindly providence shapes even our political life, everything that went into the making of Dwight Eisenhower, not only his personal career but his habits of mind and traits of personality and even his physical appearance, may have prepared him for the assignment he accepted in January, 1953, eight years ago.

In war and peace, Dwight Eisenhower has served his country with unstinted devotion. He has been given gigantic tasks and immense positions of leadership. History can not ignore him, and it is history which will decide whether he should be numbered among the great. About that question, we contemporaries of his will argue. But even his most severe critics have always been convinced that he is a good man—and perhaps whatever greatness there is in him has resulted from the fact that this goodness shone forth and was visible to all.

JOHN COGLEY.

THE SCREEN

DROP THAT NAME

AS THE MOVIE capital of the world, Hollywood may be on the skids, but it really doesn't have to advertise itself in one movie as blatantly as it does in "Pepe" to bolster its courage and fading prestige. The film has a cute enough main theme, although it hardly seems possible that it took five writers to develop its simple-minded plot. A Mexican ranch foreman is so in love with the stallion he raised from a colt that he follows the horse to its new owner in Hollywood. And then he goes to Las Vegas to turn the contents of his piggy bank into a small fortune to be able to finance the movie that this new owner wants to make in Mexico. It was inspirational of producer-director George Sidney to get Cantinflas, the charming Mexican comedian with the wonderful smile, bland innocence and baggy pants, to enliven the dull lead; but Sidney smothered this delightful actor with so many guest stars that the poor guy doesn't have enough opportunity to display his many skills.

Whenever Cantinflas is allowed full rein, however, he is certainly winning—in his affection for his horse (although one gets a bit tired of his calling the horse "my son"), in his desire to help the new horse owner (a beat-up movie director played by Dan Dailey), in his romantic inclination toward a budding young actress (nicely played and danced by Shirley Jones), and in his completely offhand manner with Hollywood "greats," most of whom he doesn't recognize and treats as—good heavens!—just people. But the film is by no means so casual about its guest stars and its famous faces are carefully labeled to be sure you get the point.

No doubt George Sidney remembered "Around the World in 80 Days," with its plethora of stars and Cantinflas' success as the valet; but the point of the stars in "Pepe" is often pointless; most of them, like Bing and Zsa Zsa and Frankie and Greer, as well liked as they may be, are only come-ons; and after the first hour, a little of this goes a long way. Edward G. Robinson plays more than a minor role; and Kim Novak, unrecognized by Pepe, helps him buy a ring; and Bing Crosby autographs a tortilla to the annoyance of Pepe who doesn't want ink on his lunch. The film has some lovely Technicolor shots of Mexico and some attractive song-and-dance numbers, but most of it is dross; three hours and fifteen minutes of name- and face-dropping is simply too much.

MUCH LESS pretentious and much more funny is "The Wackiest Ship in the Army," one of those zany service comedies that make audiences laugh

and laugh without making them realize that the subject matter is often quite serious. Richard Murphy has whipped up a lively little screenplay about a decrepit sailing ship called the U.S.S. *Echo* and its inept crew. The ship is under the leadership of a lieutenant who thinks he's ready for the big time in 1943 and not the command of this tired sailing vessel that was sort of a reverse lend-lease gift from New Zealand. Jack Lemmon, who has become one of Hollywood's top comedians, plays this commander with just the right combinations of spit-and-polish, surprise, and determination not always to be the underdog.

At an Australian port, he is talked into taking command of this silly old craft by a lieutenant-commander (John Lund), his Australian secretary (Patricia Driscoll), and the ship's eager-beaver ensign (Ricky Nelson) who really trick poor old Jack into the job. But he whips the crew into shape and leads them on a dangerous secret mission to land a scout (Chips Rafferty) who is to spy on the Japanese fleet in the Bismarck Sea. This is all told in a happy mixture of excitement and fun. Richard Murphy, who also directed this cast of cheerful sailors, has handled his men and ship well, and he brings the film to a snappy end.

COMEDY IN the movies is a very chancey thing. Perhaps Ferenc Molnar's play "Olympia," about loves and scandals and *noblesse oblige* in Emperor Franz Joseph's court at the turn of the century, was quite amusing when it appeared on the stage in 1928. But now, some thirty years later and on film, it has become a rather tired pastry called "A Breath of Scandal." In roles screaming for a young Lunt and Fontaine, John Gavin and Sophia Loren just struggle through as the industrialist from Pittsburgh and the naughty princess. His Imperial Majesty will allow this ostracized girl to return to court if she'll marry an empty-headed prince; but it seems a countess (Angela Lansbury) is interested in this prince, so she pushes a scandalous affair that has already been started between the sophisticated Sophia and the young American.

None of this nonsense is very interesting, and though some of the Molnar dialogue is bright and amusing, most of it as rewritten by Walter Bernstein is just dull. And director Michael Curtiz didn't do much to make the talky scenes lively in cinematic fashion. Maurice Chevalier and Isabel Jeans pep things up considerably as Sophia's parents and perform with a style fitting to court intrigue. Filmed in Vienna, Rome and various European locales, the Technicolor picture is extraordinarily handsome, and has most attractive costumes and sets—but the sleazy morals and pseudo-sophistication show through.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Broadside Attack on the Patriarchs of Modern Poetry

IN DEFENSE OF IGNORANCE. By Karl Shapiro. Random House. \$6.50.

By JOHN LOGAN

ALLEN TATE recently wrote, "I would think that after T. S. Eliot's death . . . there will be a violent rebellion against the whole Eliot influence. There are signs of it right now. It's inevitable and I think Mr. Eliot would approve of it." Karl Shapiro's new book of essays is just about the most articulate "sign of it" one could expect to find, appearing as it does by the hand of one of the most gifted artists of his generation, Pulitzer Prize winner, consultant on poetry to the Library of Congress and former editor of the prestigious *Poetry* magazine, where Eliot's work first appeared.

In Shapiro's book the Eliot-Pound-Yeats axis is struck head on in separate essays devoted to the re-examination of each, with an added knocking at Auden. As a literary disclaimer it reminds one of Robert Graves iconoclastic work *The Crowning Privilege*, parts of which were published in the American press separately, eliciting at the time (five years ago) outrageous response in the form of letters from Shapiro himself and other writers of reputation. In addition to the four giants Shapiro now attacks, Graves also attacked Dylan Thomas, whom Shapiro retains high in the canon.

In Shapiro view, Yeats comes off by far the best (it is his alliance with the esoteric and the cultured—capitalized—to which Shapiro objects) and Eliot emerges the most battered. Indeed I could find only one essay in the entire book, whatever its subject, which does not rail at Eliot at some point, and that one denounces Pound. "The criticism of Eliot and Pound has blighted enormous literary areas, as far as we can tell," writes Shapiro.

It is time the graduate student plagued with the problem of making an index to Eliot's erudite, crabbed essays and at the same time

puzzled by the shabby scholarship of Pound (whose literary essays Eliot calls the most important body of literary criticism written in our time) should be afforded the catharsis of an intelligent, negative view of these "fathers." Still there is more than a suggestion of animus in such a statement as Shapiro's, "Pound is not worth my time or yours." Or "In general *The Four Quartets* appears to be a deliberately bad book, one written as if to convince the reader that poetry is dead and done with." And I am surprised at the lack of aesthetic perception (which in a man of such extraordinary sensitivity strikes me as a depth blindness) in Shapiro's remark that one can interchange the sections of *The Waste Land* without changing the sense of the poem. Nothing would be easier to refute.

The oddest part of all this to my mind is that Shapiro's notion of *The Waste Land* as bad writing close to canard corresponds exactly with what some readers thought of it when it first appeared—but it is commonplace that a truly original work is hostilely received at the beginning, so that what Shapiro tries to accomplish here is really the undoing of the years of love and labor which have been spent on the poem to secure it a key place in our literature. In feeling, it's a little like having a respected neighbor and former friend of your father tell you that the rumor you once successfully scotched about your dad's having a bastard son is, after all, true. Yet when the neighbor repeats the charge every time he sees you, you begin to wonder whether he is not saying something obscure about himself rather than something lucid about the father.

Besides the patriarchs of twentieth-century poetry there are other things on the negative side of Shapiro's ledger which come in for recurring assault. These include "culture," religion and modern psychology (with the exception of the doctrine of the renegade Freudian Wilhelm Reich)—the

latter fact at odds with the occasional motive-hunting in depth Shapiro undertakes when trying to account for the failure of writers he disapproves.

The positive side of Shapiro's writing I find much the most attractive. Besides the deeply engaging, brash, insightful opening essay "The Critic in Spite of Himself" and the haughty, winning, whistle in the dark "Poet and Psychologist" (both of them required reading for American poets in the search for their image among their fellows) there is some really brilliant analysis and celebration in the book: particularly the essays, one each, on W. C. Williams ("The True Contemporary"), Dylan Thomas, Whitman ("The First White Aboriginal") and D. H. Lawrence. The Dylan Thomas essay is a very moving, sober, independent assessment of the whole range of Thomas' work, with due attention given to his flaws. It is the best single study of that poet. The Lawrence essay is really magnificently put together as a dialogue between a younger poet and an oracular figure, half T. S. Eliot and half Freud, on the status of poetry and poets. The thesis that emerges is this, that poets are out of work because they have tried to do the jobs of other professional men—priests, scholars, sociologist, psychologist—forgetting their true vocation in association with the magicians and the witchdoctors who by their art *make things happen* unaccountably in the world of the auditor.

Lawrence, according to Shapiro, remained true to the vocation, and thus allied himself to the few others of the century who (we discover in the course of the book) have done so: Dylan Thomas, W. C. Williams, Whitman, Hart Crane (with qualifications) and the splendid European triumvirate Lorca, Rilke and Cavafy. A scattering of earlier writers who also receive Shapiro's attention and help make up his own canon include Hopkins, Milton and Blake, who, like Whitman, are

deprecated by Eliot. At the same time Shapiro disapproves of certain writers in the Eliot canon, for example Donne and Baudelaire. I find his approval of the first group a good deal better substantiated than his disavowal of the second group.

If there is a single statement in the book which shows the issue between the goods and the bads, it is this ironical one, "Lawrence has committed the horrible sin of expressing his own feelings in poetry. Instead of following the 'discipline of rationally constructed imagination' [Eliot] Lawrence *expresses*." There is certainly great need for the return to feeling in poetry, though when we say a writer "expresses" it is perhaps clearer to note, not so much that he expresses himself (which everybody does willy nilly) but that he expresses *us*, his readers, which only the artist can do.

The title "In Defense of Ignorance" is obviously a reference to such a book as Ivor Winters "In Defense of Reason" with its excessive, killing rationalism and its invention of critical jargon terms used as spears to impale even such a gifted artist as E. E. Cummings. The title also calls to mind Nicholas of Cusa's brilliant *De Doctrina Ignorantia* with its platonic cast of

felt learning, its cant toward mysticism and its (irrationalist?) citation of the reality of contradiction in this life.

In the final essay of his book Shapiro juxtaposes the epigraph to his book "Everything we are taught is false" with Rilke's admonition, taken from his poem "The Archaic Torso of Apollo": "you must change your life!" It is in this last, most curious essay on Henry Miller, entitled "The Greatest Living Author," that the missionary cast of the book emerges most clearly. Miller is described as "a holy man . . . Gandhi with a penis," who more than Lawrence or Joyce (both of whom Shapiro says were not free of "puritanical salaciousness") deals freely with "the overpowering mysteries and glories of love and copulation." It is also at this point that the extra-literary character of Shapiro's present concern emerges: "It is not art that Miller cares about; it is man . . . as a writer Miller may be second or third rate or of no rating at all; as a spiritual example he stands among the great men of our age."

Now literature whenever it is important goes outside itself (despite Shapiro's contention that religion and psychology and sociology, etc.

get in the way of the poet) and we can not quarrel with his celebration of Miller on that score, though we can note the paradox of saying "the greatest living author" is someone who "may not rate at all . . . as a writer." Nor can we deny that the reading of Miller's books is a rewarding experience — particularly for those who admire "beat" novelists like Kerouac but are unaware that Miller is immensely more talented, more intelligent and wiser, and is consummate, past master of what Kerouac is simply good at: the challenging achievement of occasional, transcendent, lyric flight out of the earthbound morass of naturalistic material. (Miller's best books of course are nearly all of them still officially banned in America. This means of course that they are available only to those who are really interested and who will go to the trouble to obtain them. Miller, who makes a mystique out of "obscene literature" as an esoteric cult, is well aware of this fact and I am sure would not have it otherwise.)

However, if our attention is really to be directed to Miller as a *figure* rather than as a practitioner of literature—and particularly as a figure who has supposedly understood and revealed the mysteries of love—then how can we fail to note the melancholy fact that the aging Miller is currently rattling around lonely in his Big Sur home besieged (it is not a contradiction) by random visitors and nuts, separated from his wife and children once again. My tendency would be to look for another leader in these matters of life and love. As for Miller's being the new hope and true leader in literary matters, I find it a bit ominous that Shapiro's style disintegrates in the essay where he talks about Miller; for example, let me cite a sizable passage:

"How is one to talk about Miller? There are authors one cannot write a book or even a good essay about. Arthur Rimbaud is one (and Miller's book on Rimbaud is one of the best books on Rimbaud ever written, although it is mostly about Henry Miller). D. H. Lawrence is another author one cannot encom-

MORE THAN THE GUARDS THE DAWN

I crouch behind the parapet my caution built,
after I learned that children of my heart
came back from their encounter with the night
bruised and afraid. There is no otherness,
they said; and darkness is the very stuff of things.

Were it not written down that there's a Dawn
that eyes will see, and lips will kiss, glad arms
will hold; the army of the night would glut
its hunger on my soul's redoubts and I,
the eponym of insecurity,
would bind my hands for black and silent death.

But I stand guard. Don't let me recreate
despair, nor let light-longing fool my eyes
that I should love the stars. Flesh up my hopes,
those skeletons of dry expectancy,
that stand like spectral winter trees against
the sky of my endeavor. Wind is armed
with ice; the ground grows cold. Aurora, flame!
For I've awaited your salvific blaze
more than the guards the dawn.

E. F. SCHNEIDER, S.J.

pass in a book "about" (Miller abandoned his book on Lawrence). And Miller himself is one of those Patagonian authors who just won't fit into a book. Every word he has ever written is autobiographical, but only in the way *Leaves of Grass* is autobiographical. There is not a word of "confession" in Miller. His amorous exploits are sometimes read as a kind of Brooklyn Casanova or male *Fanny Hill* but there is probably not a word of exaggeration or boasting to speak of—or only as much as the occasion would call for."

Yet I believe the Miller essay, despite my problems with it, gives us the clue to many of the seeming contradictions and clashed textures of the book as a whole. For in this essay Shapiro writes: "Those poets who follow Whitman must necessarily follow Miller, even to the extent of giving up poetry in its formal sense and writing that personal apocalyptic prose which Miller does." Perhaps this is just what Shapiro has himself done. His book is not so much a sober "Defense of Ignorance" (which means innocence, uncorruptedness, unsophistication, the championing of the heart, with "its reasons the mind knows not of") though it is that in part, as it is a somewhat dionysiac and apocalyptic, canting work of art in its own right. Exciting and knowing as the book is, still some of Shapiro's readers may be forgiven for saying to themselves from time to time, "Karl, Karl, please be still about criticism, as you are always promising to do, and write some more poems for us." To be sure, that is always the poet's problem.

All Black and White

THE FOUNTAIN OF ARETHUSA. By Maurice Zermatten. Translated by Anne and Christopher Fremantle. Doubleday. \$3.95.

By PHILIP DEASY

NO MORE fitting text could be chosen for this review than a recent statement by one of The

Commonweal's editors: "Religion and the Church are almost never treated fictionally in terms other than the superficial, the sentimental and the false." For this harsh judgment is borne out with a vengeance in the pages of *The Fountain of Arethusa*. Clear, cool water gushes, no doubt, from Arethusa's original spring in Sicily; this fictional one emits only generous gobs of that pious pap awarding committees evidently find so delectable. For indeed *The Fountain of Arethusa* has won a prize, the *Grand Prix de Littérature*, which, the book's blurb tells us, is France's outstanding Catholic literary award.

The Fountain of Arethusa is dominated by two characters. One is pure goodness and his name is Father Seraphin Clivaz. The other is pure badness and his name is Jacques Tinembart. There is thus set up in outrageously simplistic fashion what is known as the theme of the struggle between good and evil. Jacques is the village big shot, owner of the general store and café. He just can't stand priests. So when Seraphin, angelic like his name, comes to the parish of Flaches, Jacques tells him off: "Just to let you know one thing. You are young and no doubt motivated by the best of intentions. So I wanted to warn you. I am Jacques. It was I who drove away your predecessor. He meddled in things which were no concern of his. What is not your business, Father, is people's behavior. Here in Flaches every one does as he thinks fit, and I don't allow any whippersnapper, just because he wears a cassock, to come and poke his nose into my affairs. Those dog collars who leave school mumbling a little Latin think they know more about the world than we do. Get along with you, children! Here I give the orders. Get it? I and nobody else. . . . You know where I live? You've been to the shop already. You can also come to the café. For the priest it's free. Apart from that we'll see each other from our windows, but every-one minds his own business. Okay? . . . The benefice here is ridiculous. I'll see to it. So long!"

A tough guy, Jacques, and no

mistake. And as credible as any ogre in a fairy tale. But that Seraphin! What a difference! Back in his seminary days his confessor had told him he had a propensity for dramatizing everything about himself and for canonizing himself and even making himself into another Christ. Well, "propensity" is putting it mildly. For page after page Seraphin goes on, in what might be called technically a modified stream-of-consciousness flow, lugubriously sanctifying himself all over the place. He's got it, but bad.

Yet incredible as Jacques and Seraphin are as fictional characters, they are models of verisimilitude when compared to the book's climax and the events that follow. The climax is the murder of a young crippled girl who at midnight is leading Seraphin up a mountain path toward what the girl thinks is a dying old woman in need of the last sacraments. The murderer is Jacques, and the priest, of course, sees him, but shrewd as they come, Jacques immediately drops to his knees and says that he wants "to go to confession." As he congratulates himself later, "I had to shut his mouth." He might have added, "All the easier to accuse you of the murder, Seraphin." For of course Seraphin is accused and of course he takes the rap without opening his mouth. M. Zermatten evidently counts heavily on the Catholic reader's willing suspension of disbelief regarding certain theological aspects of the sacrament of penance. He also further plays up Seraphin as a Christ figure, unjustly accused, by bringing in a Pontius Pilate figure, Judge Martin Luyet, who can't sleep because of his doubts about this just man.

Well, murder will out, as it always does in adult westerns and in this kind of Catholic fiction, and Jacques gets his comeuppance, but only after Seraphin has died in prison, Christifying himself to the end. "He had been well nailed to the crossbeam. . . . Was that the soldier's spear feeling for his ribs?" The concluding chapter records a conversation Jacques, now in the same prison (he gets fifteen years) has with a couple of inmates who

certainly remembered Seraphin. "He wasn't human," says one, speaking the truest words in the book. (The three are peeling potatoes.) "'Can you believe it, they let him preach,' another tells Jacques. 'He talked, his eyes on us, looking right in here.'" (The prisoner is pointing his fingers at his stomach.) "'And what did he say?' Jacques finally asked, putting his peeler down on his knee. 'He said, 'There's One who died for all the rest. He's the one to love.' You get the line. . . .' 'Yes,' said Jacques. He picked up his knife and went back to peeling potatoes."

Thus concludes *The Fountain of Arethusa*. Fittingly, the last image is that of cold potatoes.

Short Fiction

NIGHTS IN THE GARDENS OF BROOKLYN. By Harvey Swados. Atlantic Little, Brown. \$4.

SERMONS AND SODA-WATER. By John O'Hara. Random House. \$5.95.

THE NEW ZEALANDERS. By Maurice Shadbolt. Atheneum. \$4.

By RICHARD GILMAN

UNLIKE THE novel, with its need to encompass, bring into relation and compose, the short story has generally been an effort to isolate and arrest moments of illumination, drawing its usual matter from transitional inner events: the birth (at whatever age) of conscience or responsibility, the death of innocence, the passage into moral complexity, the opening up of the potentiality for evil, the first recognition that the world isn't oneself.

That the short story is better done today in America than the novel, and that so many of our good novels are actually extended short stories, testifies, it seems clear, to our difficulty in getting the kind of grasp on experience that can result in large imaginative structures. It is one kind of novel's task (the other kind creates myths, romances, grotesque or new vocabularies) to identify, sort out and make a music of the complicated elements of the

world, the social world pre-eminently, and we are simply too overwhelmed and bewildered for that.

Although only one has any permanent value, these three books of short fiction (I switch to that term because of John O'Hara's contribution, which is made up of three volumes containing one longish story each, all packaged in a handsome cardboard case) illustrate among them the triumphs and pitfalls of the medium. And they witness to my point that the short story does its best work when it addresses itself to some aspect of the flux, something seized or celebrated, some elegaic, wry or painful thing said about a fragment, a vantage-point or a surface, or else when it is a shaft drilled very narrowly into the richest lode in order to come up with exemplary undetailed truth.

The failures here, when they aren't due to defects of sensibility, occur chiefly when too much is attempted, when large novelistic procedures are employed within a framework too small for them, too many characters or qualities given, too long a period of time spanned. This is a common fault of young writers like Maurice Shadbolt who want to say everything that has been ripening in them, but it is also characteristic of minor institutions like O'Hara, whose literary impulse is impure because he is caught up in an embrace with data, having to pile up details, cover ground, the inclusive sociologist instead of the selective eye.

To be fair to him, O'Hara says in a curiously apologetic foreword to his new work that he knows that each of the stories could easily have been expanded to full-blown novelistic proportions, but that he chose the shorter form because he wrote from memory, without doing the massive job of research he admittedly performs for the colossi that are his literary trademark.

I think he gives himself away. The point is surely not length or multiplication of facts, but vividness and imaginative intensity, and his stories simply lack those qualities. That is due partly to O'Hara's known creative weaknesses, but also, within the terms I have been

using, to his having failed properly to use the short fictional form. The three stories are sketches for novels, of the kind that "research" only puffs up and inflates; there is still the attempt to "get it all down," thirty years, a dozen lives, the writer functioning as recording secretary.

O'Hara has virtues, of course, and they're here: an ear for speech, a certain cleanliness of line, a Scott Fitzgerald-like ability to live half within and half outside of the prevailing lesser myths—of happiness, sexual enchantment, success and bittersweet downfalls. The stories—I hasten to fulfill the reviewer's primary function—concern life in America between 1930 and the present, each a sophisticated cautionary tale about reaching for the moon and winding up with an acceptance of humbler blessings. If one wants to ignore the strictures I've made, they're entertaining enough.

Maurice Shadbolt is a young New Zealander, the chief interest in whose book, it seems to me, is its demonstration of the existence of literary beginnings in that antipodal land. I don't mean to be patronizing. Perhaps New Zealand will someday present the world with something to make its head spin, but right now, when I read that Shadbolt is considered by his compatriots their brightest star, I have to conclude that not very much is happening.

The title of his book, which he calls "a sequence of stories," indicates one of Shadbolt's ambitions: to write a chronicle of his people, to forge, with a Joycean impulse, its uncreated conscience. The stories accordingly range between Cather or Steinbeck-like evocations of frontier existence and human endurance, and urban tales whose recurrent theme is that of the tension in the sensitive young, between art, or the desire for art, and the pressures and obligations of material life, New Zealand resembling here the America of Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson.

What is wrong with the writing is its essential imprecision and reliance upon the vocabulary of emotion to convey emotion. There are too many things like "fathomless landscapes of the heart," and "she

was suddenly for him part of the summer, part of its richness." But beyond this, even when Shadbolt is sharper, he tries to put in too much: whole histories to support his dramatized moments, backgrounds, dossiers, explanations whose effect is to blur the edge of recognition. Only in one or two pieces, notably something called "A Love Story," does he limit himself to a single, though certainly not simple, image, and thereby win through to permanence and light.

Harvey Swados, whom I have kept for last, is a true, skillful and vigorous writer. If he doesn't possess a large imagination or imposing originality, he does know the uses of fiction and is able to bring off most of what he tries for. His stories all deal in one way or another with the problem of achieving or maintaining authentic life in the face of pervading spuriousness (one of his novels was called *False Coin*) and the images he employs to conquer his ground are almost always strong and self-sustaining.

Swados has a fine comic sense

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Statement of Dr. Albert B. Sabin, who developed the Sabin oral polio vaccine through research supported by the March of Dimes:

"I wish to express my appreciation to The National Foundation for its faith in my work, expressed through grants of March of Dimes funds totaling \$1,500,000.

"For 22 years The National Foundation's broad medical research program has opened new doors in the whole field of virology. It was these breakthroughs that made antipolio vaccines possible.

"I wish also to express my thanks to the American people, whose contributions to the March of Dimes made it possible for The National Foundation to support my work."

BIRTH DEFECTS PLEASE SAY YES TO
ARTHRITIS THE NEW MARCH OF DIMES
POLIO THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION

of our epoch's major poses and masquerades, and his work is armed with an exact contemporary wit whose targets are pretension, blindness and non-life, the kind discoverable in the academy, the art "world," or the factories that produce popular culture. But more than that, he is concerned with the break-through into true feeling, the attainment of moral dignity and the linking up with others through compassion, and that is where his best achievement lies.

Two shorter pieces—"A Chance Encounter" and "A Handful of Ballpoints, A Heartful of Love"—are immensely successful stories of this kind. In his longer pieces he suffers somewhat from the malady I've mentioned, that of bringing in too much, though there is usually something to redeem that. Once, in

ART

Contemporary American Art

IN HIS LIVELY treatise, *The House of the Intellect*, Mr. Jacques Barzun has most convincingly presented his contention that the creative artist is *per se* a non-intellectual; he went so far as to correlate the popularity of the plastic arts in contemporary America with our deep-seated fear and dislike of the "egghead"—the thinker and non-doer. The artist is certainly a doer, and personally I think he does enough by creating works of art; let those who will be clever, the artist will fully content us by being good.

But what makes a work of art really "good"? Those ideological battles that rage over the artists' heads—for instance, the contemporary one about abstract versus representational art—all turn on this question. I would like to propose that, granted a high degree of talent, what raises a work of art above the crowd and what makes it really superior is the presence of a viable and distinguished idea. The problem is, of course, that the image-ideas of the plastic arts are quite different from other ideas. A great sculptural idea is not neces-

a parable of literary success called "The Man in the Toolhouse," he allows his indignation to get out of hand, so that the thing comes out flat and unconvincing. But in general *Nights in the Gardens of Brooklyn* is an admirable book, and only extended comment could do more than suggest its very admirable qualities.

REVIEWERS

John Logan is a member of the faculty at the University of Notre Dame and the editor of a new verse magazine, *Chicago Choice*.

Philip Deasy, a regular contributor, is a member of the faculty at St. Peter's College, New Jersey.

Richard Gilman, a frequent contributor, has written for the *Chicago Review*, *Poetry*, *Horizon* and other magazines.

sarily a philosophical or literary idea at all, but it is no less an idea because it is expressed in a three-dimensional form. Art should be judged at least partly on its own terms: painting in the terms of painting ideas and sculpture in the terms of sculptural ideas.

The Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Art at the Whitney Museum in N.Y.C., this year devoted exclusively to sculpture and drawing, presents a useful spectrum of reference to illustrate this thesis. The exhibition is better-lit and presented than ever before, and because it is restricted to sculpture and drawing it is not as choked-up as former Annuals; thanks to these improvements, it maintains its usual conscientious effort to display a wide variety of styles to better purpose. Out of this variety the most impressive sculpture may serve to show how the powerful image-idea, in whatever stylistic terms it is expressed, is what lifts the work of art to a position of eminence.

Alexander Calder's *The Snow Flake Tree* is one of his rather familiar mobiles. It is an abstract

form which takes its shape in movement. On an upright metal rod three irregular branches hang from a cross-bar, strung with vari-sized white disks (punctuated by one large red one), all balanced so that there is a soft continuous motion like that magical, gentle speed at which snowflakes fall on a calm winter's day. The originality of the idea of a mobile is by now not in the foreground of importance; we have seen a thousand mobiles, many by Calder and many more by other people. The force of this particular work lies in that it succeeds in conveying a vivid image of a splendid sculptural idea: a galaxy of delicate forms drifting through the air like a blessing. Calder himself has effected a translation into prose of his sculptural idea with his title, *The Snow Flake Tree*. This is an abstract work, but not less full of meaning for all that. The arts have a tendency to spill over into each other (thank God, for otherwise the critic-translator's job would be even harder) and it is true that Calder's, and all "mobiles" in fact, edge into

the territory of the dance; but the essence of the value of this work is the liveliness of the *sculptural* idea and the vividness of the image of it.

Leonard Baskin's *Lazarus* should be easier to deal with because it is representational, but precisely due to this it is more difficult to detach what its purely sculptural distinction consists of. At a short distance the size, weight and outline of this form strikes so perfect a note of coherence and force that it absorbs all its expressive details into a monk-like form, wrapped in dignity and meditation. Closer, the round bare head emerges from the swaddling-shroud and the face, with the innocent line of the closed eyelid and the tiny skeletal teeth, discloses a resolute image of rebirth-from-death, an image that is as sculptural as if this idea were newborn in bronze. The impact of this sculptural image-idea owes something to our consciousness of birth and death, but its vigor is the vigor of an inspired form. Again, the artist has effected a translation of his idea into prose with the title, although in this case (as in the case of the "imagists" generally) the translation was in a way ready-made because the idea existed in our inheritance to match this new and powerful sculptural conception.

There are other examples in this exhibit which, over and above skillful and coherent "practitioners" of the art of sculpture, testify to those artists who possess notable sculptural ideas. Lipschitz' huge *Joie de Vivre* and José de Rivera's gleaming whiplash revolving shape called *Construction #73* are among the works of distinguished artists who continue to give authoritative account of themselves. *Morning*, by Polygnotos Vagis, is another that impressed me as an important work of art: heavy and soft with sleep, this head emerging from a block of quartz expressed a sort of monumental adolescence.

Note: Boston Museum of Fine Arts, January 19, 1961 to February 25th: a Modigliani exhibition of more than eighty paintings and drawings from museums and private collections on both sides of the Atlantic.

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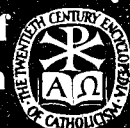
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